"FROM A RURAL SCHOOL-WINDOW"

(*ILLUSTRATED*)

OR

TALKS ON RURAL EDUCATION

WITH A FOREWORD FROM

THE HON'BLE SIR A. P. PATRO, *Kt.*

Minister of Education, Madras.

BY

R. R. SASTRY, M.A., (Licentiate in Teaching);

Fellow of the Royal Economic Society (London);

Sometime Deputy Inspector of Schools,

Dharmapuri and Pattukkottai Ranges;

Author of "South Indian Gilds."

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TO

MY DEAR MOTHER.

syllabus and the multitudinous formalities attached to any innovation should no longer be the guides of those engaged in inspection." The syllabus should conform to the needs of the localities.

It is quite true that the village schoolmaster is a "distinct type" by himself in the economy of the village. The respect with which the schoolmaster was held in the village has not yet disappeared and much depends upon the inspecting officer, and the teacher who should continue and revive the good ideals of the past Guru-Sishya Sambandha. The schoolmaster still continues to be the centre of social and cultural life in many villages. The picture of the village schoolmaster drawn by Mr. Sastry reflects rural life and condition. The school hours should be determined to suit the local conditions and the method of instruction in the village school should not fail to assimilate the indigenous and local system. The location of the school in the village is an important factor in its popularity. The children should be given light and air sufficiently to keep them cheerful and happy as the impressions are carried throughout their life apart from the immediate attention needed for their health. The sanitary surroundings should be very carefully looked into and insisted on. The school compound at least must provide a healthy ground for the recreation of the

children, whatever may be the conditions of their houses and homes. In all these matters, the co-operation of the village is absolutely essential. The teachers, inspired by high ideals, must be able to enlist the sympathy and support of the villagers in order to make the school a real centre of village life and culture.

Mr. Sastryar sketches out "pupil government" to make Elementary Education interesting. This is not new in our village life. In the indigenous or pial-school system, the schoolmaster takes the senior boy of the school as his assistant to take his place when there is necessity and to maintain discipline in his absence. In a book recently published by Messrs. Rama & Co. of Ellore under the name of "Prarambha Vidya," the experiences of old pial-school discipline are vividly described with illustrations. We have happily passed that stage. The Indian exercises and kindergarten drill are being popularised. Scouting has to be largely encouraged in the village schools as "cubs" for which the schoolmaster himself has to undergo a training. It is observed that the schoolmaster will have no necessity to rigorous punishment so long as he makes an example of the bad student in the presence of the whole school. The success of this depends upon the nature of the training prevailing in the locality. Mr. Sastryar concludes his studies with a chapter

on the "New Educational Outlook" and observes that "from the soul-killing mechanical move through one groove to the days of broad outlook and free play of nature, is no less than a revolution in educational policy. That the requisite efficiency can be the result of the unrestricted play of individual forces, provided there be a pervading centre of attachment, will ere long become an accomplished act." The change in the outlook has already come and the vision is bound to extend far into the horizon and make elementary education useful and effective to revive the village life and activity so that there may be organic relation between the village and the State.

I wish it were possible for Mr. Sastryar to develop the ideas in further detail so that his experience and knowledge may be more helpful to the officers and the schoolmasters; as it is, an intellectual picture is presented to the reader to carry on investigations of his own and work out proposals suitable for the local area.

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FROM A RURAL SCHOOL WINDOW

I.

TO THE OFFICER.

IT is always hazardous to take suggestions from such *gifted* writers of prose as Mr. A. C. Benson ; yet his book served as the best indicator for one in search of a title for a series of rambling thoughts. Perhaps my post is one of the most uninteresting, dull jobs which is invariably successful in turning potent geniuses into mediocrities.

Why such a tirade, you may ask. The reason is not far to seek. You may be a graduate in Arts or even of the tribe of Honours' men. But what of that? You are asked to inspect schools with VIII standard as the highest ; and of the preponderating majority of schools, IV is the highest class. Woe be to you if you have not got sufficient knowledge of your vernacular not to commit bad mistakes in transcription. Your simple idiomatic English prose, not to speak of the neo-poetry among some of us, has no place there.

NEVER GET DISAPPOINTED.

If after seeing Rolls Royces gliding through the Beach Road, you are to see only the historic

country-cart travelling at the rate of two miles per hour, you will have to thank your stars for that vehicle at least. More often you will have to be on your heels to reach the village school.

GET A DAILY PAPER.

Woe be to you if you do not get a daily for yourself. Closetted with the school, away from traces of civilization, the newspaper is your only solace. It is difficult to get a Tamil Daily in many villages of even the most advanced district.

Never go to the post with high hopes of exercising your authority. Realise that you are techincally only an adviser. If asked for, give proper advice. Always try to maintain the best personal relations with the Managers and Presidents concerned. More is gained through a half-an-hour interview than through lengthy correspondences tinged with bitterness and enunciation of high principles. Was it not that master-hand the late Lord (Marquis) Curzon who rebuked even the I. C. S. for their lengthy correspondence ?

CANONS OF INSPECTION.

Your canons of inspection should always aim at wide diffusion of knowledge rather than at measuring the depth thereof. If under your Range the number of schools does not increase, it does not reflect well upon your administration.

NO GOOD FEATURE ?

Is there no good feature about this office ? I shall be the last person to conceal some of the very valuable lessons one learns during one's regime. You have exceptional opportunities of moving with the dumb millions.

HAVE AT LEAST ONE HOBBY.

It is the officer who has created hobbies for himself who can utilise these opportunities. It is not far from truth, that if you have no hobbies and subjects as correctives, you are bound to turn out a mere machine devoid of initiative.

MOVE WITH THE ARTLESS INFANTS.

You may ask the pertinent question : Is there no pleasure in moving with the artless innocents ? Yes ; there is much pleasure in it ; but in 7 out of 10 schools you come across only ill-clad and dirty boys. If it is known throughout your Range that you are an officer who insists to the letter on neat appearance, you are likely to meet with better and more cheerful faces.

Unless you are an energetic, painstaking officer, the work that is before you will appear quite insipid. If you are a good student of Economics who has created a genuine taste for social studies, you have good opportunities before you in every village. Only choose a definite problem and then work at it so that your studies may have some scientific value.

The monotonous uniformity of syllabus and the multitudinous formalities attached to this office need not at all non-plus you. Which office has not got routine and "I have the honour to be," etc,? From the Viceroy to the Village Munsiff, it is the same story. The new Act VIII of 1920 and the creation of District Educational Councils have tended to make the work of the officer less full of clerical work. This must tell on the transformed sphere of work of the officer. More pointed attention should be drawn towards the diffusion of education, closer inspection and more constructive suggestions suited to the different localities.

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Photo by R. Ramasamy.

THE VILLAGE COMMON.

II.

THE SOUTH INDIAN VILLAGE.

WHEREVER one goes, marks of decay narrate to us the story of their past glory. The ungravelled road, itself the monument to the earnestness of the contractor, leads us to the temple of Ayyanar, the patron-deity of the village—with his retinue of elephants and horses.

A foot-path takes us to the main street in the village. No wonder, half of the houses are in a decadent condition. This is partly due to the migration of people to the town in quest of means of living ; partly also, the old idea of keeping the houses in a good state of repair and under healthy surroundings, is unhappily giving place to the monetary concern of such buildings. *Cash nexus* is woefully supplanting the old communal ties. For one thing, the transition is not yet complete ; nor will it ever be.

It is a part of the old village plan in South India to divide Streets on the Caste basis. The Brahman *Grahastha* rises up to the crowing of the cock and goes to the neighbouring river to return home again immediately after sunrise, after performing his morning ceremonies without undue haste or indecent bustle.

Next to this Street, we pass through streets of carpenters, blacksmiths and other artisans. At 7 A.M. everyone of them is found in his workshop (called *Pattarai*, in Tamil) busy plying his trade. On the outskirts of the village, we see huts, where the untouchable castes have their abodes. Since the object of this paper is descriptive and not analytical, the scientific basis of this construction of village-sites need not be discussed. Enough to remark that vegetarianism was held up, in great veneration.

In the east of the village, the temple of Mahadev is found, and in the west towers up the gopura of Maha Vishnu. A village without a temple and river is inconceivable. A historical study of the Aryan migration clearly shows how the "fair-haired" Aryans found their homes by the banks of beautiful life-streams; for streams which flow only during winter are not held up in high repute even to-day.

What characterised the village and what still continues to do so to a certain extent, is the communal tie of kinship. That blood is thicker than water is nowhere as true as in India. Joint ownership of land contributes its healthy influence in preserving this tie.

One other lesson of the village to the town is its religious atmosphere. This is in no small degree due to the construction of the village.

Photo by C. K. Rajoo

A VILLAGE TEMPLE.

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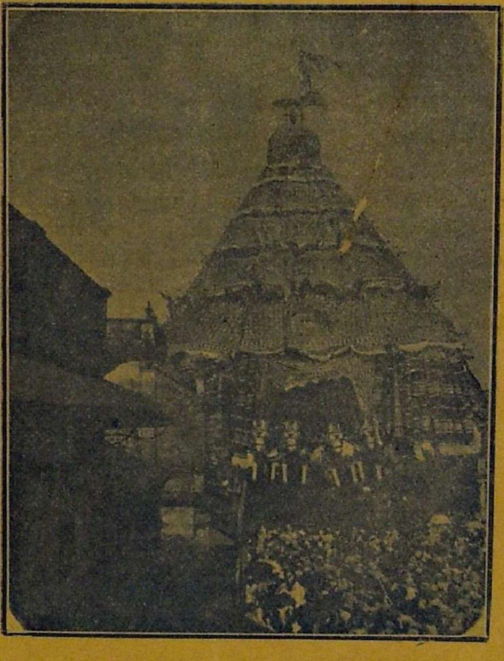

Photo by R. Naidu.

A CAR FESTIVAL.

his clay-work and paper-folding ; the branch Post-master may be fast busy with his avenues of extra income through questionable ways ; the semi-educated villager may show signs of disrespect to old institutions ; yet in the main, the village continues to preserve the best elements of rural piety and essential goodwill.

The idea of a world-league which is effete for want of a conscious moral purpose will have more lasting success in rural parts. All movements of spiritual regeneration have had valuable followers only in the villagers. Back to the village is not merely an artistic cry ; it is no less an international craving.

III.

THE RURAL SCHOOL AND ENVIRONS.

THE transition from the old pial full of boys with palm leaves in their hands to the new Board School with well-clad pupils is fairly complete. One yearns to see boys carrying to their teacher's house some vegetable or other from their houses. It was the solemn custom in the village that the first fruit or vegetable from the gardens should go to the village school-master. Those good old days are gone, perhaps never to return.

Even as to the west of the village was situated the Vishnu's temple, the *Gramachavadi*, almost in the middle of the main street was the Village School. The scrupulously clean manner in which the veranda was kept, the array of boys with their caste-marks prominently on bound to the village school in the early morning, the well-disciplined monitors in charge of their respective classes, and the universal respect in which the village school-master was held in the village—such and other points are unhappily becoming back-numbers in the village economy.

Even in the systems of teaching, the transition is complete. It is Dr. Thwing who makes the following generalisation while comparing

the educations of the East and the West after a review of the Universities of the world. "The education of the East emphasises learning, employing memory as its chief intellectual force and the education of the West emphasises thinking, employing reasoning, as its chief intellectual faculty." Such generalizations are always wide of the mark and depict half-truths which are more hazardous than falsehoods. That in the earlier stages, more stress is laid on memory is perhaps true; it is bad psychology and worse physiology no doubt. But, to underrate the element ot thinking in the East, is to show a callous ignorance of the flights of Eastern philosophy embodied in the Upanishads. The advantages of the memoriser *system* to my mind outweigh the disadvantages thereof. The results of a system of education based on a wholesome dread of straining the child's brain are neither complimentary to the hardworking teacher nor to the Kindergarten child. That $2 + 2 = 4$ should be taught for half-an-hour with elaborate appliances is not evidently the last word on the subject.

Even in such an administrative detail as the list of holidays. the change is so well-marked as to cast aspersions on the religious instinct in our young boys. Not in compulsory religious education with its overhanging spectre of protests from honest burghers, not in the mean-

ingless iteration of a self-evident need with no suggestion of constructive measures ; not in the institution of a 25 minutes' religious class in a week of 25 hours, but the true solution, here as elsewhere, lies in the old Gurukula system, the best elements of which are found at Santiniketan.

It is rare now to come across a single boy well-versed in "Thevaram, Thayumanavar Padal and Pattinathu Pillaiyar" in the highest class of the Elementary School. That a boy in the IV standard should be unable to explain the meaning of "ஈவது விலக்கேல்" is perhaps the strongest indictment against the present system. That such highly religious songs imbued with lofty sentiments should be unknown to the boy of 12 years is really heart-rending. Prof. James tells us that youth is the period for the formation of high ideals and if such a period is wasted on reading "Ali Baba and Forty Robbers" and "Jack and Gill went up the Hill," it is no wonder that the spirit of ill-informed enquiry in our College boys forms the first stage towards agnosticism.

Some shrewd villagers raise the cry that, "Your education estranges our boys from their surroundings and makes them dissatisfied with their hereditary calling without necessarily fitting them for anything better." The fall in the general tone of health is also well-marked.

The old Indian drills were better exercises than the new Kindergarten drill. That villagers not educated in the modern schools maintain a stronger build than many of the educated people is a powerful fact. Whatever the specific causes, the conclusion of poor health in our boys is traceable in the last resort to the present system of education.

IV.

LOCAL NEEDS.

THE monotonous uniformity of syllabus and the multitudinous formalities attached to any innovation should no longer be the guides of those engaged in inspection. The imperative task of adjusting syllabuses in conformity with differing local needs is not to be explained away.

The difficulties that beset one are mainly based on the lack of an elastic syllabus. The departmental syllabus issued by the Teachers' College is perhaps the best of its kind. It is lack of comprehension that raises this point of objection. When you go to a post of duty, it is you who should frame a syllabus for your edification in the first instance.

Apart from the theoretical points which have alreadybeen imbibed from the Training Colleges, practical details based upon a living acquaintance with the locality and its true representatives should pour in to fill up the gap. Above all other intellectual attainments, a broad-based sympathy should characterize the votary after true forms of rural education.

The departmental time is not at all insisted on, at present. Earlier hours of morning suit

summer and earlier closing in the evenings fits in with winter. Apart from these seasonal changes, it has been found workable after sufficient trial to have part-time schools alone in villages of shepherds and cowherds. A three-hours' school from 8 A.M to 11 A.M. will suffice for boys engaged in tending cattle. On identical grounds, a three-hours' school from 2 P.M. to 5 P.M. will suffice for boys engaged in matting and weaving industries.

A survey of the working of the existing type of education at close quarters brings into light certain considerations. The Hindu genius has been so accustomed to a particular system of learning the alphabets, that any departure from it has not been found acceptable. It has to be stated that the first letter "அ" is not a fortuitous coincidence but it is a religious truth that is conveyed by this letter. Any easy or reformed method of beginning with "ட" and "ப" is likely to do more harm than good. In fact, in one of the taluqs of the Tanjore District in 9 out of 10 schools, this new system is abhorred by the villagers. The present writer is able to record that there have been depletions in Board Schools and consequent starting of indigenous schools on this account. Already, the modern methods based on an anxiety to avoid placing any strain on the child's brain have resulted in defective letter-formation,

shabby handwriting and weak memory. Every system has its value but if it is followed as a fetish, it undermines itself.

Secondly, in adjusting the type of instruction to local needs, due regard should be paid to the empirical methods which are followed by our villagers. The Indian peasant is a shrewd rustic who learns in the hard school of experience the guiding principles of agricultural economics better than the students at costly laboratories and model farms. He loathes a circuitous method of training. In fact, any method of teaching in class-rooms about agricultural pursuits should be carefully avoided. "What the eye sees, the hand shall do"—this is his favourite proverb. Let the young student go to open fields and observe the plough at work, let him talk with the ripe old ploughman in his native tongue, let him visit periodically neighbouring fields during all the agricultural seasons. This is the most effective education our villager has received.

At the same time, no sane person can belittle the scientific discoveries at the laboratories. Demonstrations of improved ploughs and scientific manuring should also be encouraged. The use of the local languages as well as the increasing recruitment of the demonstrators from the villagers themselves will have lasting results on the improvement of agriculture.

Eventually, the recruitment of itinerant experts in agriculture, weaving and other kindred occupations in the regular inspection cadre, should be regarded as essential.

What was written in the columns of the *Educational Review* by the present writer in February 1921, seems to have gained strength through support from high circles. It is a moot question if a course of agricultural education on indigenous lines is not the only *interesting* occupation for a village of cultivators. It is time to consider if a well-thought-out open-air agricultural course is not to be started in the fifth standard itself. On similar grounds, in a village of weavers, the weaving course may be begun in the upper primary class.

In this connection, a word of caution is necessary for the various branches of Non-Gazetted Educational Officers' Associations. Corporate action within the affected class of workers has been found successful in the advanced West; it has begun to reap good fruit among the ranks of Indian labour. Thanks to the unceasing efforts of Messrs. B. P. Wadia and N. M. Joshi, it has done likewise some good among brain-workers as well. But the more positive work lies in the discussion of educational matters at least once in a quarter in each District. A mere bread-winning object should least of all characterize the educational

branch; and it is refreshing to note that a good beginning has been made in Tanjore where a lively discussion on educational reforms in contemplation and a paper on "Compulsory Primary Education" by the present writer were put in the agenda. With the District Educational Officer as President, the gathering of all the Deputy Inspectors of the District and other representatives of the teaching profession was able to thresh out some of the contemplated schemes with great effect. Such quarterly gatherings in different centres of the District with an interesting agenda of papers and discussions from personal experience, are bound to do considerable good with regard to the scope and type of rural education in different localities.

V.

THE PHYSIQUE OF CHILDREN.

MEDICAL Inspection of School Children has now reached a stage beyond experiments; and it is an important part of modern educational practice to insist on the periodic medical inspection of schools. A casual review of books on School-hygiene by Lyster or Dressler is bound to impress one with weighty conclusions on the percentage of whooping cough, bad teeth, ill-nutrition, and other common diseases among school children.

SOME REASONS ANALYSED.

From a layman's point of view certain reasons strike one obviously. Over-work in untimely hours, late o' nights, the evil aggravated by reading in kerosene light, the unwholesome practice of reserving close study to the last week prior to the examination, reading in twilights regardless of the elementary rules of hygiene, the vicious habit of sitting with a book during play-hours—all these have the cumulative effect of affecting the health of school children.

FACILITIES FOR PURE AIR.

While we shudder to encroach on the domain of the medical expert in suggesting remedies,

the more natural and obvious remedies can be suggested on good authority by the educationist. Dirty hovels, dingy huts, filthy compounds, vast dust and rubbish-heaps in the vicinity of the school are bound to shed their unhealthy influence on the ill-clad and ill-nourished pygmies within the school. The power vested in the educational authorities to refuse recognition on grounds of sanitation needs to be used with firmness and caution. In the case of the richer Board Elementary Schools, in seven cases out of ten,the building is left without a decent compound, thanks to the generosity of the contractor. More than twice was the present writer forced to inform the villagers through tom-tom that the school-compound was never intended to be used as common latrine. The urgent necessity of providing for extensive compounds in the first instance, the co-operation of the village-panchayat in maintaining the school compound in a neat condition, and the work of the enthusiastic school-master in keeping the school-garden in a tidy state not merely during the week of inspection—all these are bound to provide for the first necessity of existence, free air.

PROVISION OF GOOD DRINKING WATER.

In some villages the dearth of good wells is a marked feature. All thanks are due to the

efforts of the Government to sink wells in the needed places. In such a hard fight against nature, the willing co-operation of the villagers is highly necessary. The prevalence of malaria in some of the Taluqs of Salem District is not a little due to the wretched water in such localities. It is a heart-rending sight to witness school-children getting fever suddenly at 9 A.M. while at school; the haggard looks of the boys, the dirty dress which aggravates the outlook and the mournful mien of the ill-fed school-master—all these are characteristically pitiable sights of the ill-fated Uttangarai Taluq.

FACILITIES FOR PHYSICAL EXERCISE.

What with the advent of the new Kindergarten Drill, the old South Indian exercises of bhaskies and dandals are on the wane. The old school-master who has not yet mastered the new drill is not courageous enough to stick to his with the identical result of hunting after the two in the bush. Most of the Aided Schools go without any physical exercise; and kolattams and kummies, if any, are not regularly practised. Insistence need not be made on particular types of drill, since it often results in no physical exercise at all.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS.

The most sympathetic and enlightened inspection cannot remedy the existing state of

things. In fact the singular blemish that has been observed as standing in the way of rural education is the lack of co-operation from the villagers. In no other sphere is it so badly needed as in the neat upkeep of the school compound, the provision of good drinking water, and the much-needed facilities for vigorous physical exercises. We are living in times when physical efficiency is vouchsafed in the West through bodily as well as psychical drills; and Sandows are being well represented by the softer sex as well. If the true basis of all existence is denied or niggardly parted to the young in our Elementary schools, we need entertain absolutely no hopes about the future *manhood* of India.

VI.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOL-MASTER.

THE Village Schoolmaster is a distinct type by himself in the economy of the village. That such "a small head should carry all he knew" is no longer true of the class as a whole. Away from the din of urban life, amidst shady banyan trees and palm groves, lies the South Indian village. Invariably, Ayyanar with his retinue of horses gives one the first idea of the approach of the South Indian village. Very often, a bad road this time and a foot path on another occasion leads to the village.

If the communal spirit is not dead, the *Gramachavadi* or *Samuhamatam* serves as the school-building. Within the last decade, many Board Schools have sprung up in such localities. Such public-managed schools are invariably found a short distance away from the main street.

The Schoolmaster does not now enjoy all the amenities of village life including the liberal patronage of the village folk. Some respect to the School-master still persists in spite of the modern disruptive tendencies. That the boys should work by turns in the teacher's house is

also practically unknown in many of the rural schools. The net result is the loosening of the tie between the teacher and the taught, the decadence of the old *Guru-Sishya Sammandha*.

It is even to-day nearly accurate to say that the village school-master represents the cultural element in many a village. He is at once the centre of all written correspondence and the arbiter of many a petty squabble. As happily he is also the village postmaster in certain localities, he is easily the prominent scribe in the village. Not infrequently, the illiterate Village Munsiff seeks his help in the discharge of his legitimate functions. If the school-master is a Brahmin with a working knowledge of astrology, he becomes easily the soothsayer of the credulous folk of the surrounding villages. Thus his place is assured in the rural economy.

With the competing claims of so many contending subjects, it is no wonder that school-masters are found very busy only during the month of Annual Inspection. It is almost a gala day for the whole village when the Educational officer gets down from his country-cart. By necessity, time stands heavily on this touring officer who at best can travel at the rate of three miles per hour. The outposts of the village schoolmaster carry to their master, the news of the arrival of this demi-god !

It is almost a truism to state that all these village schoolmasters bring in one plea or other to justify the want of progress in the school. Very often, the village pests—small-pox and cholera are adduced—and mark you, their after-effects are sometimes carried to even one year! More frequently, the various agricultural seasons are brought forward to justify the lack of attendance of pupils and the straying away of boys to add to the family's earnings; a local festival in a village ten miles off is sometimes urged as a reason for paucity of attendance and invariably the lack of parental interest in Elementary Education is the kernel of the story of most of these schoolmasters. After all a pay of Rs. 12 + 4 (?) does not compare favourably with even the pay of the village postman who has had no professional training whatever. It is no use camouflaging the standing fact that his pay is not even sufficient to support a husband and wife, not to mention the prolific family of these teachers.

This state of affairs should influence every inspecting officer while he is engaged in inspection. Severe canons of criticism are out of place within the four walls of the rural school. So long as the wide diffusion of education is the policy of the State, sympathetic and constructive criticisms alone are required of those engaged in inspection. The votary at the gate of

method *qua* method as well as the specialist who frowns when he does not find the latest Montessori method in a rural school about 60 miles away from the nearest railway station, will have to pass through a series of mental adjustments before both of them arrive at a workable hypothesis. If my good specialist, Miss Corrie Gordon, often fails to find even a meagre understanding of her "play-way" in the rural schools, my answer will be the following table indicating the proportion of Elementary school-attendance :—

U. S. A.	803
Australia	686
G. B.	568
Canada	548
Japan	493
India	100

Under such circumstances, I for one will put the diffusion of education as the first and last, for at least two decades to come.

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VII.

THE VILLAGE ELDERS.

NEXT to the Village Schoolmaster come the village elders. This body is not synonymous with the village panchayat. Perhaps the best lessons in the art of Local Self-Government are learnt from this class of inhabitants. The doleful tale of the glory of the past is the kernel of their lugubrations.

To all South Indians, at any rate, the passage at arms between Nandanar and the village elders should be quite familiar. The type of this class is tellingly portrayed in those immortal songs. As a class, they are inheritors of strong prejudices, with a religious contempt for innovations as such. Every one of them is replete with stories of that boyhood—how one Muthusamy Vadhyar whipped them well, how as a result even dull Ramasamy rose up to the crowing of the cock, how all of them were experts in fractions very early enough, how such songs as Sivakavacham, Kumaresa-Sathakam, Indrakshi, and Vishnu Sahasranama were learnt by rote before they were eight years old and so on.

To a sympathetic critic of rural education, a pleasant half an hour spent with a few of this

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Photo by R. Ramasamy.

A VILLAGE PUNCHAYAT-MEETING

class is bound to be of great educative value. Only, as becomes every Indian, he must respect their prejudices and draw them out by bringing in apt parallels from his own village. Once you are able to retain their confidence, three long hours spent with them will not prove half as dull as our fifty minutes spent in geography in the High School classes.

Perhaps no other topic is so interesting as their closely-reasoned diatribe against the present system of Elementary Education with its tamarind seeds and clay models. One grey-bearded man solemnly curses the originator of this mischievous system ; another marches forward a step further and pronounces the *weighty* dictum that such a wretched system is fit only for 'White men in frozen climes.' A third weary parent gets his boy and seriously declares that his son wants *a paper and pencil for small sums* in mental arithmetic. The village schoolmaster meantime cites the name of a parent who dissuaded his boy from attending the school for the solid reason that the schoolmaster began with the letter "ta" instead of "A" in the Tamil alphabet. A more orthódox criticism of the existing method of instruction is to my knowledge, not forthcoming.

To one question alone the village elders do not give a satisfactory reply. Whenever I

meet some of these rich mirasdars, I put to them this question : 'Can you not extend your patronage to these poor schoolmasters?' Their answer is highly disappointing. That they recognise no duties by the side of the hard-working type of schoolmasters—is perhaps a regrettable state of affairs. As Sir Aftab Ahmad Khan gave out in one of his interviews, the immediate relief for these schoolmasters consists in the revival of the system of rewarding these teachers in kind.

Yet another topic affords opportunities for loud and vehement protest among these elders. The irreverence of English-educated youths towards them and their age-long customs and prejudices, is a source of standing complaint. When one of us begins to argue that it is only half-educated youths ill-trained at home who come under that category, there is no end to the volleys of attack from more than half-a-dozen quarters.

The *purohit* of the place goes to the village *chavady* at 2 P.M. conveniently after his round of *Vaidik* visits and complains loudly that his son wants more papers, pencils, and what more, a *fountain pen*. When he asked his boy last evening to cite the first verse in Sivashtakam, there were as many as half-a-dozen mispronunciations. This, he solemnly concluded, is due to

the soulless education now taught in the Sircar school.

It is cowdust-time, the ringing of the cow's bell is heard and Ramasamy Jatavallabhar invites all of them to the neighbouring river to perform their evening prayers. On the way, our Jatavallabhar sees Pothiyan Samban, his *padiyal* 'plodding homeward his weary way' and vehemently abuses him. On enquiry, I learnt that this was his *usual* way of accosting his hard-worked Pariah servant!

A day with our elders in this village is almost over, the lessons that I have learnt from them are invaluable, and in failing daylight, I too return home wiser, less conceited, and less dogmatic.

VIII.

DUTY OF THE VILLAGERS.

ETERNAL vigilance is the price of liberty—this is one of those constitutional maxims which have found expression in recent political devices as the "Recall and the Referendum" of the optional and obligatory types. The use of ostracism in ancient Hellas is in a sense a precursor of these recent political devices.

PARENTAL CO-OPERATION.

Nowhere is this vigilance more true than in the direct ratio of parental co-operation to the welfare of the rural school. In the Secondary Schools, the well-known quarterly Progress Report-Card necessitating the signature of the parent is perhaps the only connecting link, not to mention the invitations to the influential few during prize-distribution functions.

APPALLING ILLITERACY.

The appalling ignorance of the masses is evident from the following table indicating the percentage of illiterate people in our country:—

Country.	Percentage of Illiteracy.
Scotland	1·6%
England and Wales	1·8%
U. S. A.	7·7%
Ireland	17·4%
India	94%

No wonder that Scotland is reported to be the first in rank so far as effective parental co-operation is concerned. What with the miserable percentage of illiteracy in India, the duty of villagers is known for its *non-functioning.*

SOME SUGGESTIONS.

The annuals of Inspection and Prize Distribution are fitting occasions when efforts in getting a gathering of parents in villages may be taken by the rural schoolmaster. The inspecting officer should not stop with his formal instructions to the staff after inspection; he should regard it as no less his duty to address the villagers at least once a year on the urgent necessity of looking after the progress of the only centre of culture in a village—the rural school. Such occasions may also be availed of to give sound advice regarding the prevention of cruelty to animals, the vices of drink, and the dangers of flesh-eating. To me, real education begins only outside the school compound,

and all these three items of true social reform are part and parcel of rural education. No Emperor in all world's history has impressed me so much as the illustrious "Devanampiya Piyadarsi," the Great Asoka. Thus sayeth His Majesty in the second Minor Rock Edict :—

"Father and mother must be obeyed. Similarly respect for living creatures must be enforced, truth must be spoken. These are the virtues of the Law of Duty (?) (Dharma) which must be practised. Similarly, the teacher must be reverenced by the pupil and proper courtesy must be shown to relations.

"This is the ancient Standard of Duty—leads to length of days and according to this, men must act."

STATUS QUO.

What do we actually see in these rural localities? Clannishness, and petty jealousies are incidental vices in the far-away interior. The few half-educated villagers pen Mahazars against the poor schoolmaster, the schoolmaster instead of relying wholly on his work and character, manages to send counter-mahazars; the discontented unsuccessful candidate for the village post-master's place writes to the educational authorities reporting about the neglect of his legitimate duty; the same mischievous man chameleon-like writes to the

postal authorities that the village school-master-cum-Branch-Post-Master refuses to give cards and stamps in time—such incidents though of value to the Inspecting authorities are not at any rate the legitimate channels of parental co-operation.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES.

In no country is it so true as in ours, that the religious tie is still a strong bond of connection. The common occasions as Mari Amman festivities, harvesting feasts during Pongal, Deepavali holidays, and Navaratri rejoicings, may very well be utilised with effect by the village school-master for addressing the parents in Ramayana-Chavadies or the village commons.

THE STRONG NOTE OF THE MINISTER.

The vigorous note of our Minister on the spread of education in all villages inhabited by not less than 500 people depends for its unqualified success on the unstinted co-operation of the Inspectorate, the willing extra-work of the village school-master on the lines suggested above and above all, on the interest evinced by the village-panchayats, the cream of the Rural population.

IX.

COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION—A PEEP.

IN moving a Resolution to appoint a mixed Commission of officials and non-officials to frame definite proposals regarding the gradual introduction of Free Elementary Education, the late Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale made the following significant observations on the 18th March 1910 from his seat in the Imperial Legislative Council:—"The increased efficiency of the individual, the higher general level of intelligence, the stiffening of the moral back-bone of large sections of the community, none of these things can come, without such (Elementary) education." Towards the end of the year, in reply to the discussion about this topic in the pages of "The Spectator" and "The Times," Mr. A. P. Patro (now the Minister of Education in Madras) contributed a series of four carefully-prepared articles to the "Indian Patriot" under the heads of "Nature and Scope, History, The Neglect, Practical Suggestions and The Means." Mr. Patro gave the problem of Primary Education in Madras a stronger basis than ever before. I wish to draw pointed attention to his article on "Practical Suggestions," where he meets

some of the fallacies successfully and makes the following weighty observation:—" Unless an awakening is created in the country and a *desire is really felt by the people, the action of Government will not bear fruit.*"—(Italics mine).

A REVIEW OF THE RECENT ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ACTS.

It has taken eight long years for the second city in the British Empire to get an Elementary Education Act passed; Bihar and Orissa had its Act passed on February 26th, 1919, the Punjab Act was passed on April 7th, Bengal passed an Act on May 14th, the U. P. followed suit on June 7th, and the Madras Act received the assent of the Governor-General on 18th November 1920. It is evident that all these Acts belong to the pre-Reform period of legislation; and it is interesting to note that premier Bombay has come out with another Act to rectify the shortcomings of the previous one. All these Acts are agreed in leaving the initiative for the introduction of compulsory education to local authorities. The Bengal Act went further by requiring all Municipalities to undertake a survey of the condition of Primary Education in Municipal areas and to submit an estimate of the cost of introducing compulsory education "for boys between the ages of 6 and 10 residing within these areas."

EFFECT ON THE GRANTS-IN-AID.

The transition from the system of payment by results to the system based on the average attendence of pupils classed under backward and otherwise, was complete even before these Acts. The next stage was payment for the number of teachers, graded according to their qualifications, general as well as professional. There was always the standing instruction to the Inspecting officer to see that the newly-calculated sum was not below what would be arrived at under the old Rules. The teachers in public-managed schools were used to be paid a capitation allowance in addition to their pay. Even under the new mode of calculation, the teachers in the Aided Elementary Schools had a justifiable grievance at the poor sum they were able to get, over and above what the Manager took for his share. Accordingly, the Report of the Bureau of Education in the Government of India reviewing the progress during 1919-20 has the following remarks to offer *re* the Grant-in-Aid :—"The tendency is to substitute a system of grants to Aided Primary Schools under which the primary teacher is assured of a fixed and, as far as possible, adequate monthly stipends instead of an income which depends partly on the number of pupils in his school, partly on the results obtained by them at examinations." It is to be pointed out

that Sections 24 and 43 of the Madras Act do not make any reference to this regrettable phenomenon. This tendency of assuring a primary teacher in the aided school of a "fixed, adequate, monthly stipend" deserves the early and pointed attention of the Department.

COMPULSORY AND FREE EDUCATION.

The need for introducing compulsion, if any further reasoning be required, will be evident from the following table indicating the proportion of Elementary School attendance :—

India	100
Japan	493
Canada	548
Great Britain	568
Australia	686
U. S. A.	803

Accordingly Sections 44, 45 and 46 of the Madras Act state the conditions under which compulsion can be introduced in a locality. Section 47 has got an important proviso attached to it. The local authority of "such area" is obliged to "pay compensation for such period and in such manner as may be prescribed for any loss of income, which may be caused by such remission of fees to Elementary Schools under private management." The progress thus far made in Madras was elicited by the talented Leader of the Opposition on 15-11-'22. The

Hon'ble the Minister of Education laid on the table the following information :—Negapatam, Kumbakonam, Vellore, Tinnevelly, Conjeeveram, Erode, Tiruppur, Mayavaram and Tellicherry have got Government sanction of their resolution for introducing compulsion. Erode leads off for introducing compulsion to *girls also.* Further the Local Boards that have decided to levy the Education Cess under Section 34 are 71 Taluk Boards and 17 Municipalities in the Presidency. It is refreshing to note that in many of these centres, the passing of the Compulsory Education Resolution has synchronised with the visit of the Minister of Education or the talented Inspector of Municipalities.

THE NEED FOR A CONSCIENCE CLAUSE.

The necessity of a Conscience Clause in schools in which religious instruction is *regularly* provided has been unhappily thrown out by the Madras Legislative Council. The weakest part of the chain consists in the provision sought by Section 53 (4) for the starting of a new school in cases of protest from "ten guardians" to send their children to an institution where a different faith is taught compulsorily. On the other hand, in his letter to the Bishop of Lucknow, (the Hon'ble) Mr. C. Y. Chintamani has again established his marked foresight. As

finally approved by the U. P. Government, the text of the Conscience Clause runs thus :—

" (*a*) No one shall be compelled to attend any religious instruction or observance, as a condition of his admission into, or continuance in, an aided educational institution, if he or his parent or guardian (if he is a minor), objects to it and informs the authorities of the institution of his objection in writing."

X.

VILLAGE CUSTOMS AND PREJUDICES.

IT has been the hobby of the passionate missionary to write on some of the customs of our villages to serve his purposes; all the arts of advertisement from the bill-board to fine photography are availed of by him to give wide publicity to these so-called barbarous details. No less was the interest evinced by the ill-informed globe-trotter in such archaic details. An earlier generation of Orientalists finding fortuitous coincidences between the customs prevailing here and in the glorious Hellas drew fantastic conclusions, which are one by one losing ground, thanks to the industry and patience of the modern school of Indian Research.

Looking back to the customs of our forefathers is thus no insignificant or misdirected task. To portray faithfully some of these customs, fondly believed in and jealously guarded by our elders, is perhaps one of the legacies of the modern school of research. Sympathy and a strict regard for truth are essential in any such attempt, however limited it be in scope.

Disruptive tendencies have already begun to manifest themselves in our rural life. It is yet peculiarly gratifying to cast wistful glances at the decaying customs in our villages. The old village was no less a unit full of kinsmen alone. The strong prejudice still persisting in villages like Sundarapandiapuram in Tinnevelly District and among the three-thousand Thillai Brahmanas religiously to avoid marriages outside their circle of relatives, is based upon this historical fact.

The common occurrence of the whole village fasting till the dead body is removed from the particular house still lives green in our minds. In a town like Kumbakonam or Madura for that matter, this regard for the dead is wofully disappearing.

Again, take the usual festival of Ayyanar-prithi (to propitiate Ayyanar, the presiding deity of the village), when the whole village acts as one man. In a day when our communal differences are widened and intensified through a variety of causes, indigenous as well as foreign, my mind loves to linger on these common festivities when one vies with another in making the occasion an unqualified success. The usual festivals of *Grama-Santhi* (purification ceremony of the village) and *Varuna-Japam* sustained prayer to the Lord of Rains in bad

times) were other occasions when differences, if any, in the village merged in the wider interests of the village as an unit.

It is no uncommon occurrence in our villages to see all the villagers, able-bodied as well as weak, striving their best to tide off the main flood into less dangerous tracks by raising the bund and erecting temporary anicuts. The story of the boy who saved the tank is typically South Indian.

A foreigner often loves to dwell on the suspicious characteristics in our villagers. Not merely is he suspicious of the alien but rarely does he elect to have his meal in a new house, though the house-owner be of his own tribe. The basis for this habit is perhaps to be found in the fact that the Brahmana has to perform the *Pancha Mahayagna* before his daily meal. These are the Agnihotra, Aupasana, Devapuja, Vaisvadevam and Athithipuja. The performance of these five holy ceremonies presupposes sanctity of one's home and punctilious preparations in one's *own home*. Even so, the orthodox Saiva has his own *Guru-puja*. What a cataclysmic change to normal hotel-life and tea-parties!

It is perhaps not widely known that a Brahmana is not allowed to go through the main street of the Panchamas in many of the villages. For, goes the saying, "once a Brahmana enters

a Panchama Street, the whole village gets desolated in a day or two." If an example of superstition quâ superstition is wanted here is one for critics.

The Margosa tree with its hanging ghôsts as well as the Banyan tree with the weird sisters living under-ground are no less common phenomena in our villages. Unused wells which count one or two unwary victims in their tales are again widely believed to be haunted by ghosts o'nights.

Loveliest village of my youth, I prefer thee with your ghosts and archaic beliefs to dingy, dissipated and disintegrated towns. That India should continue a continent of villages, is my earnest longing.

XI.

THE NEW EDUCATIONAL OUTLOOK.

FROM the soul-killing mechanical move through one groove to the days of broad outlook and free-play of nature, is no less than a revolution in educational policy. That the requisite efficiency can be the result of the unrestricted play of individual forces, provided there be a pervading centre of attachment, will ere long become an accomplished fact.

The historic rise of the Bolpur School of Rabindranath is bound to have its lasting effect on the Indian Educational System. For one thing, the place of Psychology in Education—though a term abhorred in the eighties—has well-nigh become a corner-stone of educational thought. The latest letter of Sir M. Sadler only corroborates this. The next step is to put a premium on institutions of the Bolpur type. The latest reports of improvements in school-plan only indicate an agreeable move on the right line. There remains only the necessity for putting up buildings where permanent records are to be kept in the case of Elementary Schools, the rest of the school-building is to be preferably open air, where the artless young

can read "in communion with nature." Temporary sheds may satisfy the needs of winter.

Surely here remains the best solution of decades of a soulless and godless education. Not in compulsory religious education with its over-hanging spectre of protests from honest "burghers," not in the meaningless iteration of a self-evident need with no suggestion of constructive measures, not in the institution of a thirty minutes' religious class in a week of thirty hours; but, the true solution here as elsewhere lies in the old Gurukula system the best elements of which are found at Bolpur.

When the wind blows like this, the Madras Elementary Education Act has yet to be made progressive in this respect. It is expected that the practically though not legally objectionable part of the Act, which suggests the remedy of a new school in cases of conscientious protest from honest burghers, will ere long become moribund. Hard experience alone will bring about the desired amendment; for one thing, the Indian peasant is a shrewd conservative who is found to stick to his Ayyanar and Esakki, in the very holy sepulchre of Jesus.

Readers of the Spectator's "country-manners" need not be treated to the wastage incumbent upon a copy of institutions which have been tried and found wanting. To any observer the

old Matriculation seems to have been reached after a decade of trial in a novel line. Our Boards are only beginning to build schools in a plan, which owing to a peculiar system of management, are ante-diluvian only by a century. Men as well as institutions ought to make use of lessons learnt in the hard school of experience.

One furthur internal blemish consists in the stereo-typed use of text-books, regardless of the culture and needs of the locality. It is a striking problem to consider if the time has not come when prescribed syllabuses on a dull plane have not to be deleted altogether. In other words these tabular statements are out of place in the open air system; particular seasons are bound to have their interacting influence over the hitherto lifeless regime. One striking instance, when the sweet Kokila began its songs, have we not read that all the boys at Bolpur were at once turned towards this gay messenger? Here lies the use of the ear, the gateway to the heart.

Again, it is a moot question if a course of agricultural education on indigenous lines is not the only interesting occupation for a village of cultivators. It is really difficult to answer otherwise the shrewd queries of villagers who are not interested in having their sons at school

during the agricultural seasons. It is time to consider if a well-thought-out open air agricultural course is not to be started in the fifth standard. On similar grounds in a village of weavers the weaving course may be begun in the upper primary class. Improvements on such lines alone can make the Compulsory Elementary Education a success.

Further with the spread of these ideas, the question of State *vs.* Voluntary Education is bound to assume a growing importance. Happily, the increasing demand for popular government, and the intense satisfaction in self-expression have in them very strong tendencies towards voluntary institutions. Purely public-managed institutions by their very nature cannot have the desired result in the new line. If the ill-timed and mischievous wrangling of our leaders were only to be directed along this line of individual self-expression, if only the desire to be original results in an analytical study of the ancient institutions, if only the historic cry of no taxation were to merge into the voluntary support to indigenous institutions where the best elements in the old system are to be preserved, many of the true educational needs of villages would have ere long been successfully met.

One broad blemish has to be acknowledged In platforms and councils, our orators have been

fairly good critics but our educationists and intelligent patrons have only produced replicas of Government institutions, in needy localities. This is itself no easy work. But, when golden days are being described with overcharged metaphors, genuine attempts to establish such institutions under modern surroundings, have been deplorably disproportionate. With the distinguished exceptions of the "Gurukula" at Hardwar, Brindaban and Nasik and the famous school at Bolpur, the run has been towards one-sided imitation. The besetting error with Indian Education has been the growing educational discontent despite the increasing statistics of schools and colleges. This discontent is mainly economical. While in the West, the young who have won the war are "winning the peace," the best educated young of India find themselves face to face with clerkdom, vakildom, or nevertheless poor school-masterdom. So, quality is the supreme concern ; mere number has been found wanting. It is gratifying to note that Native States like Baroda and Mysore have waken up at last to the intense need of technical education. The movement from below has anyway not been sufficiently weighty.

These are some of the many interesting and intricate problems bound to crop up very soon if not already ; and it is to be hoped that the movement of "hands-off" and "communion with nature" will be allowed to show its beneficent effect so that many a knotty problem may find the natural solution.

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